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Notes

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"VELA CADUNT," VERG. *AEN.* III. 207

The translation of this phrase by "the sails are furled," or an equivalent, has become so stereotyped that it may seem bold to question its correctness. The lexicons appear to be unanimous for this meaning. Georges (7th ed.) translates *cadunt* by "eingezogen werden," and Lewis, *School Dict.*, and *Elem. Lat. Dict.*, by "are furled." The phrase does not seem to be cited by Forcellini-De Vit, Klotz, or Lewis and Short, a serious omission, whatever its meaning.

In the *Thes. Ling. Lat.*, III, 20, 70, the example from Vergil is cited in connection with Ovid, *Fasti*, iii. 585 and *Ars Amat.* i. 373; Lucan, v. 432; and Gloss. iv. 468. 28, *vela cadunt deficientibus ventis*. This last example, and the fact that the Vergilian passage is not separated from the others, seem to suggest that the writer of the article *cado* took the words in the sense that will be mentioned below. But since the ordinary meaning "fall" suits all, or nearly all, the examples in section I. A. 2, where these passages are cited, some comment seems called for, if the writer did not accept the traditional meaning given by Georges; cf. also Stowasser, *Wörterbuch* (1900), who renders *cadunt* by "gehen nieder, senken sich." Since more than two lines could be spared in *Thes.* i. 39. 55 ff., to pillory an alleged mistranslation of *ab maioribus* in Vit. vi. 3. 5 (see *Class. Phil.* II, 113), it would seem that either *demittuntur* or *detumescunt* might have been inserted after *vela cadunt*, and all chance of misunderstanding avoided.¹

It has not seemed worth while to make a complete examination of the innumerable translations and editions of Vergil, but I have looked into a large number of them, enough I think to justify me in referring to the meaning given above as the traditional one. This traditional meaning is found in all the English translations which I have consulted, from Dryden's "the canvas falls" to Williams' "down came our sails" (1908), including both the prose and the verse translation of Conington. The same is true of the German commentators, so far as I have examined them, and of the English and American editions. Many editors do not translate the words at all, and in such cases it is natural to infer that they accept the traditional rendering, as indeed is frequently implied by their comments on the passage as a whole. For example, "it would seem that in all difficult

¹ A rereading of the article "*cado*" in the *Thes. L.L.* makes it seem probable that the writer had in mind the meaning *demittuntur*. With the meaning *detumescunt* the examples should stand under II, not under I.

places, as when nearing the coast, the ancients used only their oars" (Greenough and Kittredge), and "they exchange sails for oars, in order to have the ships more under their control as they approach the shore" (Dennison-Frieze), which are typical, clearly imply a belief that the change is dictated by choice and not by necessity.¹

In only three instances have I found what I feel sure is the correct translation: in Benoist, who has "les voiles tombent, cessent d'être tendues"; in the prose version given in the Delphin edition (Valpy reprint, Lond., 1829), which is *vela detumescunt*; and in Henry, *Aeneidea*, II. 403, who cites Heyne, Voss, Peerkamp, Thiel, and Jal (*Verg. Naut.*, 379) for the traditional rendering *demittuntur*. Heyne, in spite of his rendering, cites Ovid, *Fasti*, iii. 585 as parallel, as do Benoist and Henry correctly for their version.

That this is the true meaning in the Vergilian passage seems evident from the fact that it is the only possible one in the parallel passages cited by the *Thes. Ling. Lat.*, and because, once one's doubts are aroused, *vela cadunt* does not seem a natural equivalent of *vela contrahere* or *subducere*. Moreover, it suits the context. The breeze fails the sailors as they near the land, as often happens, and they resort to the oars. Either they did not take time to furl the sails (note *haud mora*) or if they did, the poet does not think it worth while to mention the circumstance. That the oars were sometimes used without lowering the sails is highly probable, and in fact is shown by the passage from Lucan which is cited below, if Francken's interpretation of it is correct, as it seems to be. Usually, however, the sails would be brailed up on the yards (see the passage from Ovid, *Fasti*, below) to make the rowing easier, unless the distance to be traversed was short. That the sails were commonly *brailed up* and not *lowered* in such cases is clearly shown by numerous passages and works of art. Even in the Homeric ship either could be done. See *Odyss.* iii. 10, *ἰστία νηὸς ἐλθὼς στείλαν ἀέραντες* and *Id.* ix. 149, *κελσάσῃσι δὲ νηυσὶ καθέλομεν ἰστία πάντα*. The latter seems to have been done when the ships were beached; the former when the oars were used.

Let us now examine the other passages. Ovid, *Fasti*, iii. 585 ff., reads as follows:

Vela cadunt primo, et dubia librantur ab aura
 "Findite remigio" navita dixit "aquis!"
Dumque parant torto subducere carbasa lino,
 Percutitur rapido puppis adunca noto
 Inque patens aequor, frustra pugnante magistro,
 Fertur, et ex oculis visa refugit humus.

Here the meaning is perfectly clear. The sails become flat and sway to and fro in the shifting breeze. The sailors attempt to brail them up (note *subducere*),

¹ Some editors of school texts who do not commit themselves to the traditional meaning in their notes do so in their vocabularies, either directly, by giving that meaning under *cado* (Greenough, Bennett), or indirectly, by omitting the other meaning (Knapp, Carter).

but before they can do so, the south wind strikes the canvas and sweeps the ship out to sea. As Peter says, "Die Segel sinken schaff herunter, weil der volle Wind aufhört." No one, so far as I know, translates *vela cadunt* in this passage by "the sails drop (are furled)," although some editors do not make any comment at all. No one seems to cite as parallel *Aen.* iii. 207, naturally enough perhaps, since it is so generally taken in a different sense, although the contrast in meaning might well be referred to by those who believe that the meaning is not the same in the two passages. But it seems wholly unlikely that Ovid, especially in lines so reminiscent of Vergil, should have used the phrase with a meaning entirely different from that given it by the earlier poet.

In Ovid, *Ars Amat.* i. 373, *sed propera, ne vela cadant auraeque residant*, we have precisely the same meaning; cf. Brandt, "Eile, damit nicht beim nachlassen des dir günstigen Windes das Segel zusammen falle." Of course a case of hysteron-proteron.

So too in Lucan v. 427 ff. (Francken):

flexo navita cornu
Obliquat laevo pede carbasa, summaque pandens
Suppara velorum *perituras colligit auras*.
Ut primum levior propellere lintea ventus
Incipit *exiguumque tument*, mox *reddita malo*
In mediam cecidere ratem.

Here Francken's comment is: "(vela) reiecta in malum reciderunt in mediam navem. Pendent vela et cursum navis (remis adactae) non aequat ventus sed tardior est."

Evidently the phrase *vela cadunt* is the regular (technical?) expression for the flattening out of a sail from loss of wind, and it seems very improbable that Vergil used it in a different sense. If he did, which I cannot myself believe, the editors of Vergil should comment on it, Ovid, *Fasti*, iii. 585 should not be cited as parallel, and our lexicons should give both meanings.

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"LARGITER POSSE," CAES. *B.G.* i. 18. 4-6

The late Professor Morgan, in his *Addresses and Essays*, 14, records a joke of Livy's, which he accompanied by a wink at the appreciative reader. He concludes: "Is it necessary to put up a signboard with a printed notice, 'The following is a joke'? It seems so for many Europeans; but let not us Americans be so stolid."

These words give me courage to commit to print another of my *marginalia*, which I jotted down many years ago. In Caesar, *B.G.* i. 18. 4, it is said of Dum-norix: "his rebus et suam rem familiarem auxisse et facultates ad *largiendum* magnas comparasse." In sect. 6 Caesar continues: "neque solum domi sed etiam apud finitimas civitates *largiter posse*." It seems probable that in the last